



Canada Social Report

Federal Policy Monitor

May 2015



CANADA SOCIAL REPORT



The [Caledon Institute of Social Policy](#) regularly scans for the release of federal government policies and programs that impact areas of interest, including income security, disabilities, health, housing, poverty reduction, recreation, seniors and youth.

Monitors can be searched on the Canada Social Report website by date and category.

DISABILITY

The government released more details of the financial assistance it will provide to survivors of Thalidomide. In March 2015, \$180 million was released to support survivors for the rest of their lives. This amount included a lump sum, tax-free payment of \$125,000; ongoing yearly support payments; and an Extraordinary Medical Assistance Fund. Three levels have now been set for annual support payments: \$100,000, \$75,000 and \$25,000 per year. More than 70 percent of current Thalidomide survivors are automatically eligible for \$75,000 per year and can request a reassessment for the maximum level of support of \$100,000 per year for the rest of their lives. Recipients will not be required to reapply each year or to submit receipts.

In addition to the ongoing funding and lump-sum payments, the annual Extraordinary Medical Assistance Fund of \$500,000 is designed to support survivors who need specialized surgery, home or vehicle adaptations. The scope and eligible expenses, and the claims process will be determined in consultation with the Thalidomide Victims Association of Canada. Access to this fund will be based on the specific needs of individual survivors.

"New" individuals who believe they are survivors of Thalidomide will have six months to come forward and identify themselves to Health Canada. To qualify as a Thalidomide survivor, "new" individuals will need to satisfy one of the three criteria set out in 1991, which existing survivors have previously met.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=978709>

EDUCATION

The federal government announced additional funding of \$10.5 million over three years to allow Pathways to Education to expand into new sites and support programming for youth. Pathways is a community-based program that partners with governments, social welfare agencies, community organizations, the private sector and volunteers to provide youth with tutoring, mentoring and financial assistance. More than 5,000 students currently receive support from Pathways; 2,200 have graduated from the program to date.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?mthd=tp&ctr:page=2&nid=976979&ctr:tp1D=1>

The federal government announced a \$12.5 million investment over five years to Let's Talk Science, a program that encourages interest in kindergarten to Grade 12 students in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The funding will allow Let's Talk Science to expand its programming to reach five million young people from across Canada over five years, particularly those living in rural, remote and Aboriginal communities outside the major city centres. The funding will also increase the number of Let's Talk Science Outreach sites at universities and colleges to almost 50 across the country and expand the



organization's capacity to reach French-speaking Canadian students in Québec and across Canada.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?mthd=tp&crtr.page=3&nid=977609&crtr.tp1D=1>

EMPLOYMENT

Statistics Canada's *Labour Force Survey April 2015* reported that employment edged down in April (-20,000), as gains in full-time work were more than offset by losses in part time. The unemployment rate held steady at 6.8 percent for the third consecutive month. In the 12 months to April, employment increased by 139,000 (+0.8 percent), with all of the growth in full-time work. Over the same period, the total number of hours worked increased by 0.9 percent.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/150508/dq150508-eng.pdf>

Statistics Canada reported that in March, 517,900 people received regular Employment Insurance (EI) benefits, up 5,900 or 1.1 percent from February. Compared with March 2014, the number of EI beneficiaries rose slightly (+2,600), the first year-over-year increase since February 2010. For the third consecutive month, Alberta led all provinces in terms of growth in the number of beneficiaries, with an 8.9 percent increase in March. Notable increases also occurred in Saskatchewan (+3.8 percent), Nova Scotia (+2.8 percent), Newfoundland and Labrador (+2.2 percent) and Manitoba (+2.0 percent). Slight gains were recorded in British Columbia and Prince Edward Island, while there were fewer beneficiaries in Québec, and little change in New Brunswick and Ontario.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/150521/dq150521-eng.pdf>

Statistics Canada's *Megatrends 2015* report detailed falling union membership rates in Canada. Today, a union member is as likely to be female as male and work in an office, school or hospital. The unionization rate fell from 37.6 percent in 1981 to 28.8 percent in 2014, with men accounting for the largest portion of the decline. Women, in turn, saw their rate of unionization hold steady at just over 30 percent. While the unionization rate for men decreased for every age group, it was especially pronounced in the 25-34 and 35-44 age groups. A major reason behind this trend was the employment shift from industries and occupations with high unionization rates, such as manufacturing, to industries and occupations with lower rates, such as retail trade. For women, however, the stability in the unionization rate, especially for older women, may be explained by their concentration in industries with a high unionization rate, such as health care and social assistance, education services and public administration.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/150528/dq150528-eng.pdf>

GOVERNANCE

The Parliamentary Budget Officer released *Supplementary Estimates (A) 2015-16*. In summary:

- the Government of Canada is asking Parliamentarians for \$3.2 billion

in new money to implement the spending plan outlined in Budget 2015. This represents the largest Supplementary Estimates (A) since 2009-10

- the funding requested in these supplementary estimates places an emphasis on infrastructure spending across the country. Of the total proposed spending, \$1.1 billion is earmarked for federal infrastructure renewal. Transfers to Crown Corporations supplement government-owned capital spending, including infrastructure provisions of \$403 million for Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority and \$355 million for Marine Atlantic
- in the Whole of Government spending framework, the government proposes to boost the spending on "A Clean and Healthy Environment" and "A Vibrant Canadian Culture and Heritage" by 13 percent. These increases are a result of added funding for the Nuclear Legacy Liabilities Program, and infrastructure funding for Parks Canada, respectively.

http://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/files/files/SuppsA_2015-16_EN.pdf

HEALTH

Statistics Canada's *Health Indicators (82-221-X)* is now available and includes updated health region level estimates on unemployment from 2006 to 2014, as well as population estimates and the dependency ratio from 2001 to 2014. The publication includes more than 80 indicators that measure the health of the Canadian population and the effectiveness of the health care system. Designed to provide comparable information at the health region and provincial/territorial levels, these data are produced from a wide range of the most recently available sources. Health regions are defined by the provinces and represent administrative areas or regions of interest to health authorities.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/150525/dq150525-eng.pdf>

HOUSING

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation reports that lower oil prices are contributing to disparities between provincial housing markets. A slowdown in housing starts and resale transactions in oil-producing provinces, such as Alberta, will be partly offset by increased housing market activity in other provinces, such as Ontario and BC, which benefit from the positive impacts of declining energy prices, a lower Canadian dollar and continued low mortgage rates.

<http://www.schl.ca/en/corp/hero/here/2015/2015-05-25-0816.cfm>

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation released its *Mortgage Consumer Survey*. The annual survey, the largest and most comprehensive of its kind, provides insights into the behaviours, attitudes and expectations of Canadians when acquiring, renewing or refinancing a mortgage.

<http://www.schl.ca/en/corp/hero/here/2015/2015-05-28-1000.cfm>